

## Getting 360-Degree Feedback Right

Maury A. Peiperl

Reprint R0101K

Over the past decade, 360-degree feedback has revolutionized performance management. But one of its components—peer appraisal—consistently stymies executives and can exacerbate bureaucracy, heighten political tensions, and consume lots of time.

For ten years, Maury Peiperl has studied 360-degree feedback and has asked: under what circumstances does peer appraisal improve performance? Why does peer appraisal sometimes work well and sometimes fail? And how can executives make these programs less anxiety provoking for participants and more productive for organizations? Peiperl discusses four paradoxes inherent to peer appraisal:

- In the Paradox of Roles, colleagues juggle being both peer and judge.
- The Paradox of Group Performance navigates between assessing individual feedback and the reality that much of today's work is done by groups.
- The Measurement Paradox arises because simple, straightforward rating systems would seem to generate the most useful appraisals—but they don't. Customized, qualitative feedback, though more difficult and time consuming to generate, is more helpful in improving performance.
- During evaluations, most people focus almost exclusively on reward outcomes and ignore the constructive feedback generated by peer appraisal. Ironically, it is precisely this overlooked feedback that helps improve performance—thus, the Paradox of Rewards.

These paradoxes do not have neat solutions, but managers who understand them can better use peer appraisal to improve their organizations.



# Stanford

EXECUTIVE EDUCATION  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

In the Heart of Silicon Valley

### Specialized Programs

**Advanced Negotiation Program**  
February 4 - 8, 2001

**Credit Risk Modeling for  
Financial Institutions**  
March 4 - 9 and October 14 - 19, 2001

**Managing Teams for Innovation  
and Success**  
April 1 - 6, 2001

**Negotiation and Influence Strategies**  
April 22 - 27 and October 21 - 26, 2001

**Strategic Uses of Information Technology**  
April 29 - May 4, 2001

**Excellence in Developing and  
Manufacturing Products**  
July 8 - 14, 2001

**Financial Management Program**  
July 8 - 20, 2001

**Executive Program in Strategy  
and Organization**  
August 5 - 17, 2001

**Marketing Management Program**  
August 5 - 17, 2001

**Managing Your Supply Chain for  
Global Competitiveness**  
August 26 - 31, 2001

**E-Business and Supply Chain Management**  
September 18 - 20, 2001 (in Hong Kong)

**Human Resource Executive Program:  
Leveraging Human Resources for  
Competitive Advantage**  
September 9 - 14, 2001

**Silicon Valley E-Commerce**  
October 9 - 12, 2001

**Leading Change and  
Organizational Renewal**  
November 4 - 9, 2001

### General Management Programs

**Stanford Executive Program**  
June 24 - August 7, 2001

**Executive Program for Growing Companies**  
February 18 - March 2 and  
July 22 - August 3, 2001

**Stanford-N.U.S. Executive Program**  
July 29 - August 17, 2001 (in Singapore)

**Advanced Management College**  
September 16 - 21, 2001

### Management Degree Program

**Stanford Sloan Program**  
September 4, 2001 - July 9, 2002

### For more information contact:

Elif Somay  
Office of Executive Education  
Stanford Graduate School Business

Phone  
(650) 723-3341

Fax  
(650) 723-3950

E-mail  
executive\_education@gsb.stanford.edu

Web  
www.gsb.stanford.edu/exed

## Harvard Business Review Notice of Use Restrictions, May 2009

Harvard Business Review and Harvard Business Publishing Newsletter content on EBSCOhost is licensed for the private individual use of authorized EBSCOhost users. It is not intended for use as assigned course material in academic institutions nor as corporate learning or training materials in businesses. Academic licensees may not use this content in electronic reserves, electronic course packs, persistent linking from syllabi or by any other means of incorporating the content into course resources. Business licensees may not host this content on learning management systems or use persistent linking or other means to incorporate the content into learning management systems. Harvard Business Publishing will be pleased to grant permission to make this content available through such means. For rates and permission, contact [permissions@harvardbusiness.org](mailto:permissions@harvardbusiness.org).